DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 472 505 HE 035 619

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TITLE	Final Report of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Postsecondary Educational Attainment. State of Maine, 120th Legislature, First Regular Session.
INSTITUTION	Maine State Legislature, Augusta. Office of Policy and Legal Analysis.
PUB DATE	2002-01-00
NOTE	38p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Educational Attainment; Educational Change; Educational Planning; *Higher Education; *Student Financial Aid
IDENTIFIERS	*Maine

ABSTRACT

In response to growing concern about the impact on economic prosperity resulting from the low level of higher educational attainment in Maine, two bills calling for study of that issue were introduced in the 120th Maine Legislature. A commission was created to develop a plan to improve the state's level of higher educational attainment. This report is the Commission's report to the Legislature. Maine lags behind other states in most measures of prosperity and educational attainment. Major changes will be required to improve educational attainment in Maine, and the most important thing is to establish education as the clear number one, long-term priority for the state. The report contains 14 recommendations for higher education in Maine. These recommendations center on the development of a consensus higher education plan and research to identify practices to improve student learning. Student financial aid is addressed by the recommendations, which also include options to increase research and development in the state's universities. Appendixes contain the authorizing order for the study, a list of members of the Commission, a list of presenters to the Commission, and a draft of the proposed higher education legislation. (SLD)

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ED 472 505

Final Report of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Postsecondary Educational Attainment

Office of Policy and Legal Analysis Maine Legislature

January 2002

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Final Report
of the
THE BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

January 2002

Office of Policy and Legal Analysis
Maine Legislature

STATE OF MAINE
120TH LEGISLATURE
FIRST REGULAR SESSION

Final Report of the THE BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

January 2002

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to growing concern about the impact on economic prosperity resulting from the low level of higher educational attainment in Maine, two bills calling for study of that issue were introduced in the First Regular Session of the 120th Legislature. The bills were referred to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. L.D. 1797, "Resolve, To Establish the Blue Ribbon Commission on Postsecondary Educational Attainment, emerged form the committee with a favorable report and was enacted as Resolves 2001, chapter 66.

The resolve created a broadly representative 15-member commission consisting of legislators and representatives of public and private postsecondary educational institutions, business, labor, state government, financial aid providers, guidance counselors, and organizations dedicated to student achievement. The commission was directed to develop a plan to improve the State's level of higher educational attainment and to report its recommendations and any implementing legislation to the Second Regular Session of the 120th Legislature. This document is the Commission's report of the to the Legislature as required in section 8 of the Resolve.

From our study, it is clear that education plays a vital role in the economic prosperity of a state and that postsecondary educational attainment achieved in a variety of ways is a critical component of economic progress. Those facts are truer today then ever. Postsecondary education in some form is today virtually the only way to assure for our citizens the ability to participate fully in the economic progress of society. Higher education is no longer one of several ways to achieve middle class status and all the economic, civic and cultural benefits that includes. Instead it is a prerequisite for the type of jobs that make such a life a possibility.

Maine chronically lags behind other states in most measures of both prosperity and educational attainment. Maine particularly suffers when compared other New England states. It is vitally important that as a state we take steps to break that pattern. More of our students must pursue education beyond high school. More of those students must remain in or return to Maine after completing their studies. More adults must pursue training, retraining and other postsecondary study programs. And all our citizens must become lifelong learners.

For that to happen, many changes must occur. One of the most important is to support the aspirations of our young people for higher education. That requires early, individual career planning services for students and families, the highest level of support for financial aid programs that we can afford, and the availability of quality programs of study at all the State's institutions of higher education. The educational needs of the current adult population also need to be attended to because they will continue to make up the majority of our workforce for years to come. Above all, we must begin to establish education as the clear number one, long-term priority for the State of Maine. Less than that will not do.

The necessary changes will require an investment of additional resources, largely from state government. In these times of fiscal uncertainty, such a commitment will be difficult. It is not a decision that we can shirk, however. A long-term commitment is necessary, must begin

immediately and be sustained over time. Our recommendations are tailored to the fiscal needs facing the State right now. They begin the commitment necessary and set the stage for continuation of that commitment into the future.

Recommendation #1: Maine must begin immediately to craft a consensus higher education vision statement and long-term action plan that will make its people among the best educated in the world.

Recommendation #2: The Higher Educational Attainment Council is created to provide a permanent voice in support of higher education and to establish a vision for, advocate on behalf of and promote the value of higher education in the State.

Recommendation #3: The Department of Education in collaboration with the Council shall develop a plan and initiate appropriate action regarding:

- Accelerating implementation of the Career Preparation component of the System of Learning Results through Department of Education rulemaking and guidelines as appropriate;
- Integrating Career Preparation into the curriculum so that it is not an add-on responsibility solely of the guidance staff and doing so in the early grades;
- Developing a statement of best practices and benchmarks for measuring the success of implementation of Career Preparation standards;
- Developing a plan to mobilize retiree volunteers, former local students currently in college and other resources in the community to counsel current students on the value of higher education.

Recommendation #4: The Commissioner of Education shall convene a working group to identify best practices that may be implemented K-12 and that are designed to strengthen students' aspirations and reinforce their early goals for higher education. The working group shall examine innovative uses of existing and volunteer resources and, where necessary, evaluate the need for new resources necessary to attain the State's vision for higher educational attainment. The Commissioner shall report to the Council.

Recommendation #5: The Commissioners of Education, Labor and Economic and Community Development shall convene a working group to develop a plan to comprehensively address the learning needs of adults, to improve the ability of adults to access appropriate postsecondary education programs and to provide remediation for students who leave high school unprepared for postsecondary study. The working group shall report to the Maine Higher Educational Attainment Council.

Recommendation #6: The Maine Higher Educational Attainment Council shall identify ways to encourage and assist employers to counsel their employees on career planning and educational choices and to encourage a range of employer actions that support educational attainment for employees and their families.

Recommendation #7: The Maine Higher Educational Attainment Council shall develop a plan to double the Maine Student Grant Program within 5 years and make the case for that increase to the Legislature.

Recommendation #8: The Maine Higher Educational Attainment Council shall review the possibility of establishing new or expanded loan forgiveness or loan repayment programs, tuition reimbursement program for current employees or other student financial assistance programs as a way to reduce the financial barriers to postsecondary study by both traditional students and adult learners. The possibility of programs targeted at occupational or geographic shortages should be considered. The Council shall report its findings and recommendations to the Legislature.

Recommendation #9: The Maine Higher Educational Attainment Council shall review and report to the Legislature on the possibility of addressing the high cost of higher education by using tax credits to encouraging private giving to qualified educational endowments that would be used to offset the unmet needs of students.

***Recommendation #10*:** The Maine Higher Educational Attainment Council shall review and report to the Legislature on other student financial aid options to address the high cost of attending institutions of higher education in the State, including;

- Encouraging college graduates to remain in Maine by offering tax credits to graduates from Maine institutions of higher education who remain and work in the State
- Identifying ways to encourage a greater commitment by employers to support tuition reimbursement for current employees, possible tax or other incentives

Recommendation #11: The public and private institutions of higher education in the State shall convene a retention summit of their chief academic officers, and including outside experts, to identify best practices for improving persistence and develop a plan for implementing those practices where needed.

Recommendation #12: The Maine Higher Educational Attainment Council shall work with the public and private entities engaged in research and development in Maine to develop a comprehensive strategy to create a research and development capability that will generate economic opportunity for the people of Maine and that is balanced between the public and private sectors.

Recommendation #13: The Council shall regularly examine the capacity of post secondary educational institutions in the State to meet the educational needs of Maine citizens and report its findings to the Legislature.

Recommendation #14: The Legislature must continue to support public higher education institutions to meet their on-going goals for quality education and services and periodically augment that funding to address access issues relating to general or specific capacity problems.

I. INTRODUCTION

It is clear that economic prosperity rides on the back of education and that postsecondary educational attainment achieved in a variety of ways is a critical component of economic growth. Those facts are truer today then ever for several reasons. First, postsecondary educational attainment is important because today's workforce needs a wide range of skills and only the most basic of those are provided by K-12 education. Additionally, workers' skills need to be upgraded several times during their careers; and postsecondary educational programs of all types are best positioned to accomplish that. Third, although traditional job skills continue to be important in attracting and retaining employers to the State, today's economy is increasingly driven by the transmission of information, the exchange of ideas, and the use of technology. The critical thinking and communication skills necessary to engage in those activities are part and parcel of post secondary education. Finally, the kind of research and product development that is fostered by graduate-level study and research at institutions of higher education is vital to assure real growth in the "new" economy.

Historically, economic growth in Maine has trailed that in most other states. Although benefiting from a relatively strong economy in recent years, Maine has not made significant progress relative to other regions. The State has also lagged other areas in the level of postsecondary educational attainment of its citizens, and that trend is particularly obvious when we compare ourselves to the other states in New England. That there is a clear link between educational attainment and economic progress has been demonstrated by study and is widely accepted. Whatever the reasons for our historic low level of attainment, Maine is destined to fall further behind the rest of the nation in the educational level and economic well-being of its citizens unless we develop a plan and commit to a long term course of action to reverse our present course.

II. CREATION OF BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION

In response to the growing concern about the impact of the low level of higher educational attainment in Maine, two bills calling for study of that issue were introduced in the First Regular Session of the 120th Legislature and referred to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. L.D. 1797, "Resolve, To Establish the Blue Ribbon Commission on Postsecondary Educational Attainment", which was the more comprehensive of the 2 bills, emerged form the committee with a favorable report and was enacted as Resolves 2001, chapter 66. A copy of the legislation authorizing the Commission is found at Appendix A.

The resolve created a broadly representative commission of 15 members consisting of legislators and representatives of public and private postsecondary educational institutions, business, labor, state government, financial aid providers, guidance counselors, and organizations dedicated to student achievement. Members of the Commission are listed in Appendix B. During some of the Commission's deliberations, Commissioner Albanese requested that Harry Osgood represent the Department of Education. The commission was directed to develop a plan

to improve the State's level of higher educational attainment and to report its recommendations and any implementing legislation to the Second Regular Session of the 120th Legislature.

The commission was appointed in the fall and held its first meeting on September 20, 2001. The commission met 5 more times and concluded its discussions at its last meeting on December 11, 2001. Appendix C contains a list of individuals who made presentations to the commission and the organizations they represented.

This document is the report of the Commission to the Legislature as required in section 8 of the Resolve. Commission deliberations, findings and recommendations are described in the report and a copy of our recommended legislation is attached at Appendix D.

III. COMMISSION DELIBERATIONS

Early on, the Commission recognized the tremendous breadth and depth of knowledge about postsecondary education issues possessed collectively by its members. In fact more than one of the speakers who made presentations to the Commission commented on the fact that the Commission did not need more information, it just needed to apply its collective expertise to formulate a policy. Therefore, while it reviewed national and state data and invited numerous informed individuals to make presentations about specific institutions or programs related to its charge, the Commission also relied heavily on the experience of its members in framing the issues affecting postsecondary educational attainment in Maine and developing recommendations. As a result, our report is informed both by statistics and data and by the strong belief of our members that as a system higher education in Maine is in crisis. It needs a bold vision supported by policy makers and citizens; development, coordination and prioritization of programs and services in pursuit of that vision; promotion of the benefits of higher education to students, families and workers from all social and economic backgrounds; and long term commitment of resources targeted toward the vision.

A. Educational attainment level—why it is important/how Maine compares

Two elemental principles guided the Commission's deliberation: First, postsecondary education in some form is today virtually the only way to assure for our citizens the ability to participate fully in the economic progress of society. Higher education is no longer one of several ways to achieve middle class status and all the economic, civic and cultural benefits that includes. Instead it is a prerequisite for the type of jobs that make such a life a possibility. That position is supported by data on average income and lifetime earning capacity of individuals grouped by educational attainment. For example, in Maine, holders of associate degrees, bachelor degrees and advanced degrees can expect to earn respectively 17%, 49% and 205% per year more than those who are high school graduates only.[1] Nationally over a lifetime of working,

1 Silvernail, David; presentation at Legislators Policy Forum; 12/13/01; based on 1990 Census and US Department of Labor data.

a male college graduate can expect to earn $1,162,840 more than a person who holds a high school diploma only.[2]

Today's economy and the ability to participate meaningfully in the society that supports it require an increasing level of knowledge and skills that is acquired through higher education and training and retraining programs. Maine cannot attain and sustain an adequate level of prosperity in the new century and enhance its civic and cultural values and institutions without an educated citizenry. For that reason, the Commission finds that as a state we are in serious trouble. That finding is bolstered by the experience of employers in the State. Annual surveys of Maine businesses conducted by the Maine Development Foundation indicate that, for 1999 and 2000, 61% of employers experienced difficulty each year in finding skilled workers. Furthermore, when asked to identify the most important issue affecting long-term economic growth in Maine, the 2001 survey results tabulated so far indicate that employers' top answer is "an educated workforce".[3]

The second principle guiding the Commission is that the State plays a critical role in ensuring the opportunity for postsecondary educational attainment of its citizens. Furthermore, the growing importance of higher education imposes increasing responsibility on the State. That responsibility involves commitment of resources, but it must involve much more. A commitment to a broad vision, a long-term plan of implementation and a respected and responsible entity to track implementation of the plan are needed. Initiation of improvement must start at the state level.

As have other studies, the Commission finds that the traditional level of postsecondary educational attainment in Maine is barely adequate at best. Although a recent U.S. Department of Education report [4] finds Maine with the highest high school graduation rate in the nation among 18 to 24-year olds—94.5%, compared to 86.5% nationally, the situation is vastly different when considering higher education attainment levels. U.S. Census data ranks Maine at 24.1%, below the national average of 25.6% and last in New England, well below the 30.8% average for the region in the percent of adults (25 years of age and older) with 4-year degrees.[5] A report by the Maine Development Foundation identifies the significance of postsecondary educational attainment on the State economy and its citizens and businesses. [6] A second recent report by the State Planning Office finds a direct correlation between the economic prosperity of a state and the interaction of two factors: the level of adults with bachelor degrees and the level of research and development in that state. [7] Given those findings and Maine's low level of higher

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2 Postsecondary Education Opportunity; Private Economic Benefit/Cost Ratios of a College Investment for Men and Women 1967-1999, P.8; November, 2000

3 Data Source: Maine Development Foundation 1999, 2000 and 2001 Survey of Maine Citizens and Business. Survey results do not reflect the views of the Maine Development Foundation.

4 Central Maine Newspaper article; Maine leads U.S. in high school grads; 11/16/01.

5 Figures based on Maine Economic Growth Council, Measures of Growth—2001; January 1, 2001.

6 Maine Development Foundation; Higher Education Achievement in Maine; March, 1998.

7 State Planning Office: 30 and 1000—How to Build a Knowledge-based Economy in Maine and Raise Incomes to the National Average by 2010; Revised November 2001.

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educational attainment, it is not surprising that the State ranks low nationally in per capital income. The Maine Economic Growth Council has been tracking personal income in the State since 1994 when the State's ranked 37th nationally. The Growth Council has established a benchmark goal of improving the State ranking to 25th place by the year 2005. In its most recent Measures of Growth 2001 report, the Growth Council finds that Maine still ranks 37th. It is clear that the price of continuing our pattern of low educational attainment is that Maine will remain mired near the bottom of the ladder in commonly accepted measures of economic prosperity. The questions posed to this Commission and which the State must face are why has post secondary attainment lagged and what can we do about it.

B. Range of postsecondary educational options in Maine—search for a vision

Viewed comprehensively, a broad range of postsecondary educational opportunities is available to Maine citizens, including offerings by public, private and proprietary institutions, licensing and certification programs, workforce training initiatives, and adult education. Nearly 60,000 students are enrolled in public and private institutions of higher education in the State; and close to 10,000 degrees are awarded each year.[8] The Community College Partnership, a recent initiative of the Maine Technical College System and the University of Maine System has enrolled over 1000 students in associate degree programs after just 2 years; and enrollments are expected to grow significantly in coming years. Numerous other certificate and occupational credentialling courses and programs are available serving a broad range of learners. Over 100,000 adults are taking non-degree courses for modest costs at adult education learning sites throughout the State.

Nevertheless, large and sustained increases in the participation in all the programs cited above are essential to achieve the level of postsecondary educational attainment envisioned in the charge to the Commission. What the overall goal should be, the proper timeframe for attainment, the benchmarks to measure improvement, how to assess progress and how to assure that adequate capacity is available to meet the goals are some of the questions that need to be answered.

C. Education vs. jobs—we need both

There is an ongoing debate in the education community about whether the goal of education ought to be to create an educated and enlightened populace and that such an end has value in itself or whether the goal of education and the real measure of its value to society is the extent to which it provides training and specific job skills to the workforce. That appears to be a debate that carries over between the K-12 and postsecondary education levels.

The Commission considers this debate to be irrelevant!

The truth is we need both education for its own sake and education as job training. That is so because, if our State is to prosper economically, politically and culturally, all types of

8 New England Board of Higher Education: CONNECTION:FACTS 2001: p.37

learners must be able to satisfy their educational needs. For some citizens, the motivation to pursue higher education is the pursuit of knowledge, the challenge of new ideas or the mastery of some area of study. The "carrot" for them is pursuit of knowledge. For other members of society, the motivation is to gain specific job skills. Their "carrot" is to prepare for employment or improve earning capacity. In the end, the State needs more of both types of learners and learning opportunities.

The challenge for the State is to create a vision, plan and set of goals that encourage all types of students to pursue higher education, and make sure that the proper mix of postsecondary educational opportunities are available.

D. Barriers—the impact on aspirations

Recent study by the Finance Authority of Maine, [9] ongoing research by the National Center for Student Aspirations at the University of Maine and emerging analysis by the Mitchell Scholarship Research Institute provide some insights into why educational attainment in Maine is low. Present indications are that K-12 students generally value higher education regardless of their geographic, cultural, social or economic differences. Many, perhaps most, students start out thinking of higher education as an admirable goal, but for many something happens along the way to deter them from that goal or something fails to occur to enable them to meet it.

Preliminary findings by the Mitchell Institute indicate to the Commission a number of factors that may interact to prevent students from moving on from high school to higher education. Those factors include:

- Household environment
- Student aspirations
- Student motivation and self-directedness
- Family academic background
- Student academic preparation and exposure to challenging class work
- Family socio-economic status
- College costs and student financial aid

The importance of these factors as barriers to student higher educational attendance seems to vary based on the type of student. Those students who in high school enroll in advanced placement or honors courses (as opposed to regular college preparatory or general/vocational courses) are more likely to have available to them in the home and the school the support needed to pursue education beyond high school. Those students seem to be personally more able to cope with the goal-setting, planning and research needed to move on to postsecondary study. The question for them is not so much whether, but where, to go to college. It is for most regular college prep and general/vocational students that the factors are more likely to constitute real barriers to going on at all. Although they acknowledge the

9 Finance Authority of Maine: 1997, Futures at Risk???, South Portland, ME: Market Decisions, Inc.

importance of college and indicate an interest in attending, the goals of these students tend not to be articulated clearly or early enough and their efforts are easily stymied by any one or a combination of the factors listed above. This group is where our attention must be focused if we are to improve Maine's level of educational attainment. For these students, we need a different set of strategies to allow them to fulfill their aspirations for higher education.

It should be noted that encouraging more students who do attend college to do so in Maine or to return after graduation would also contribute to raising our level of educational attainment as well.

Adult learners may face additional barriers like availability of childcare and the need to continue earning while upgrading skills. In addition, it is less clear what this group's aspirations are for continued study and how those aspirations affect educational decisions. Given the need for members of the current workforce to upgrade their job skills sometime during their careers, it is important that we learn more about this group of potential students.

IV. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As indicated above, the Commission finds that Maine faces a crisis in educational attainment. Our charge is to develop a plan to address that crisis. Many issues need to be addressed, and it was difficult sometimes to tell where to focus our attention. Indeed we found that to design a comprehensive and specific plan was not possible in the time available. As a result, we are making several specific recommendations in this report that we believe set us on the proper path. We are also recommending several other issues receive additional consideration before final recommendations are presented in those areas and that our course be reconsidered and adjusted as necessary over time. We hope this report will contribute toward establishment of the importance of postsecondary education and the creation of the needed vision for higher education. But it is only the first step; more work will be needed. This is our plan.

A. Creation of a long-term vision for higher education

Findings: The first step must be to establish education as the clear number one, long-term priority for the State of Maine. That includes a comprehensive approach to education from pre-K to postsecondary study and beyond. Maine people should be as well educated as any in the world and must be life-long learners. Unless we can agree to do that, Maine will be relegated to the bottom of the economic growth ladder.

With respect to higher education, that means state government and the higher education community, but more importantly, the public, including students, their families, employees and the business community must understand and support the importance of higher educational attainment. It is critical to foster a broad based understanding of the importance of higher education. That will contribute toward establishing the political and fiscal support to provide the resources required to raise the level of attainment. During difficult fiscal times, higher education is one of the first areas to experience budget cuts. For example, in its 1996 report to the

Legislature, the Commission on Higher Education Governance traced the impact of budget cuts on Maine public institutions of higher education during the tight budgetary times earlier in that decade. The commission found that between 1989 and 1996 the cumulative percentage changes in General Fund appropriations for the Maine Technical College System and Maine Maritime Academy were 5% or less. The University of Maine System actually experienced a 1.8% decrease in funding during that period. At the same time, the CPI, the General Fund as a whole and certain other programs in the General Fund increased by double-digit percentages. That study found that one result was that tuition cost grew by over 40% in the University System. The study also found that state funding to support student financial aid had not kept pace with tuition increases and that fact had an impact on enrollment at Maine institutions of higher education. At that time, Maine was one of only 4 states not showing an increase in enrollments.[10]

The result of this cyclical funding pattern has been periods of barely adequate support punctuated by cycles of flat funding or declining support for public higher education. In turn that has led to higher tuition rates and fewer student financial assistance programs at public institutions of higher education. For private colleges, the impact is felt most severely in reduced student financial aid dollars from the State that makes it difficult for in-state schools to compete with comparable out-of-state institutions for Maine students. Given the high cost of college, many students and families find the economic payoff lacking or may choose to attend college outside the State because they find a better financial package at an out-of-state college. That cycle must be broken.

At 24%, Maine ranks last in New England in the percentage of its adult population with at least a bachelor's degree. Perhaps that is not surprising given its location, culture and economic condition and the emphasis on public and private higher education in the southern states in this region. Some suggest that Maine needs to reach at least the New England average of 31%—a level of educational attainment that will require extraordinary effort. The Commission understands that achieving that level would require essentially doubling the current number of degrees awarded every year for a decade. Others argue that the national average of 26% would be a more realistic goal. Still others believe that 4-year degrees are not the only measure of educational attainment appropriate for Maine and that other types of postsecondary study ought to be considered in our goal setting as well. One of the key elements of the long-term vision will be to establish a challenging but realistic goal. The existence of a widely accepted target is a way to crystallize support for educational attainment and ought to be the first step in establishing the educational vision for the state.

10 Maine Legislature; Report of the Commission on Higher Education Governance; July 1996.

Recommendation #1: Maine must begin immediately to craft a consensus higher education vision statement and long-term action plan that will make its people among the best educated in the world. The vision must be designed to:

- o Increase the level of higher education attainment by Maine citizens over an appropriate timeframe as measured by widely accepted standards;
- o Make enrolling in Maine institutions of higher education a more appealing option for in-state and out-of-state students and increase the likelihood that they will persist to graduation once matriculated; and
- o Increase the rate at which members of the current workforce and especially displaced workers enroll and complete worker training and retraining programs.

B. Establishment of the Maine Higher Educational Attainment Council

Findings: To address the State's higher educational attainment needs, the Commission finds that creation of a new permanent council on higher educational attainment is necessary. The purposes of that council which would be modeled after the Economic Growth Council are to:

- Create statewide vision for higher education participation and attainment, goals to achieve the vision, and performance indicators and targets against which accomplishments of the goals can measured.
- Conduct on-going identification of the programs and policies that are in place in Maine to achieve the goals, and gaps in meeting the goals.
- Identification of best practices in other states and countries; and
- Review and report to the Governor and the Legislature on alternative strategies to meet the goals

Recommendation #2: The Higher Educational Attainment Council is created to provide a permanent voice in support of higher education and to establish a vision for, advocate on behalf of and promote the value of higher education in the State.

The Council will consist of 16 members appointed jointly by the Governor, President of the Senate and Speaker of the House of Representatives. Four of the members should be legislators with a demonstrated interest in higher education. The remaining members should represent a broad range of interests, including but not limited to: higher education, K-12 education, business, and labor. At least one of the members must be a member of the Maine Independent College Association.

The Council will operate as follows:

- o The term of appointment is 3 years and members may be reappointed
- o Staff support will be provided by Maine Development Foundation
- o The Council is authorized to solicit and accept funds and gifts in support of its activities

- Funding of the Council is a shared responsibility of state government and the business community
- In carrying out its responsibilities, the Council must use an open, diverse and collaborative approach, including working groups with broad representation from key concerned groups and the general public.
- In developing the long range benchmarks for educational attainment, the Council is subject to the following guidelines:
  - The process must be long-term and continuous with a multi-year planning horizon
  - The process must have a strategic focus and measurable outcomes, with clear goal-setting and performance indicators
  - The process must be statewide in scope
  - The process must consist of a public and private partnership that is objective and nonpartisan
- The long range plan* for educational attainment must
  - Be designed to provide the best possible return to students in the State and the State's economy by preparing students for work in the modern economy
  - To the extent possible, build upon existing programs

  *Note: The plan will not be prescriptive, nor will it evaluate specific institutions or programs.

C. Enhance Career Preparation

Findings: The Commission heard ample testimony and is convinced that if Maine is to break the pattern of lagging attainment in higher education, it is vitally important to provide age-appropriate career preparation throughout the elementary and secondary grades. We must begin to work with students at a young age to build and support their aspirations about higher education, to reinforce its value and to provide to them and their parents the information and assistance necessary to enable participation. Career preparation must be integrated into the regular school curriculum, not treated like a separate content area. In many ways, what is needed is a cultural change in our schools—the creation of an atmosphere where it is expected that all students will go on to higher education.

By the 2002-03 school year, the Learning Results law requires schools to have adopted a comprehensive education plan that provides for implementation of the career preparation component of Learning Results, including interim targets. Full implementation of career preparation is scheduled for 2006-07 under the law, and the first high school graduating class subject to all learning results standards will be the Class of 2010. Many schools have already begun implementation; but full implementation is a long way off. Because of the importance of Career Preparation Standards to improving educational attainment, the Department of Education should use its influence to motivate schools to move up implementation of the standards. The resources of implementation of those standards are included in the Essential Programs and Services initiative to be considered by the Legislature.

Early and full implementation of the Learning Results Career Preparation standards may provide only part of the answer, however. The Commission met with representatives of the Committee on Transition and the Gear Up Program. Both of these programs offer services to targeted students that include a comprehensive career preparation component. The key to those programs is early, individual attention to eligible students. The objective is to explore career options, identify an individual's assets and barriers, set goals and map out a plan to attain those goals. These programs while still new appear to working well and, we believe, the successful principles and practices identified from such programs should be replicated more widely. They work because the targeted population is small making a high level of individual attention possible. In order to apply the principles of those programs across the State, each school would need to provide considerably more one-to-one contact between each student and a professional career educator. The Commission also met with guidance counselors from several different types of public high schools; and we know how understaffed most guidance offices are. We are concerned that providing the level of career preparation necessary will most likely require a significant increase in resources.

Recommendation #3: The Department of Education in collaboration with the Council shall develop a plan and initiate appropriate action regarding:

- Accelerating implementation of the Career Preparation component of the System of Learning Results through Department of Education rulemaking and guidelines as appropriate;
- Integrating Career Preparation into the curriculum so that it is not an add-on responsibility solely of the guidance staff and doing so in the early grades;
- Developing a statement of best practices and benchmarks for measuring the success of implementation of Career Preparation standards;
- Developing a plan to mobilize retiree volunteers, former local students currently in college and other resources in the community to counsel current students on the value of higher education.

Recommendation #4: The Commissioner of Education shall convene a working group to identify best practices that may be implemented K-12 and that are designed to strengthen students' aspirations and reinforce their early goals for higher education. The working group shall examine innovative uses of existing and volunteer resources and, where necessary, evaluate the need for new resources necessary to attain the State's vision for higher educational attainment. The Commissioner shall report to the Council.

D. Address adult learning needs

Findings: The Department of Economic and Community Development and the State Planning Office project that 77% of Maine's 2010 workforce is already in the workforce and that the population growth of Maine citizens in the age group likely to enter the workforce for the first time between now and then will be minimal. According to a March 2001 report issued by the Maine Technical College System there are 455,000 Maine adults between the ages of 18 to 55 that do not have a college degree. Based on a survey conducted by the System, twenty percent or

90,000 of those adults expressed interest in enrolling in college within the next two years. In addition, 61% of Maine's employers state they are unable to find skilled workers, in fact, one in five are being forced to recruit out of state or internationally according to a recent survey by Maine Development Foundation. Therefore, enhancing the educational level of current workers is essential to raising the overall educational attainment of the workforce and addressing the continued success of many of Maine's key industries.

Recommendation #5: The Commissioners of Education, Labor and Economic and Community Development shall convene a working group to develop a plan to comprehensively address the learning needs of adults, to improve the ability of adults to access appropriate postsecondary education programs and to provide remediation for students who leave high school unprepared for postsecondary study. The working group shall report to the Maine Higher Educational Attainment Council.

Recommendation #6: The Maine Higher Educational Attainment Council shall identify ways to encourage and assist employers to counsel their employees on career planning and educational choices and to encourage a range of employer actions that support educational attainment for employees and their families.

E. Improve student financial aid

Findings: The high cost of college attendance is a very real obstacle for many students and their families. The cost of tuition is above average for all types of higher education institutions in Maine, especially the private colleges and public two-year programs. The major need-based state grant program, the Maine Student Grant Program (MSGP), provides maximum grants of $1000 and $1250 for Maine students attending in-state public and private institutions respectively. Grants of $500 and $1000 respectively are available to Maine students attending out-of-state public and private institutions. The Commission believes that modest increases in individual grant amounts could make many students' and families' unmet needs more manageable and their financial aid package more competitive with out-of- state institutions. That would help to both increase the State's overall participation rate in postsecondary study and promote enrollment of Maine students at in-state colleges.

The large number of eligible students makes even a moderate increase in individual grants expensive. To attain the significant increase in the level of educational attainment the Commission finds necessary, the State must make a serious commitment. Although we believes it would be a sound investment, a significant increase in the MSGP at this time, seems unlikely given the uncertain fiscal situation facing the State. However, we believe that the overall funding to the program should be doubled from $9 million to $18 million at the earliest possible time.

Other financial aid initiatives also should be considered as a means to encouraging greater participation in postsecondary education by both traditional and nontraditional students.

Recommendation #7: The Maine Higher Educational Attainment Council shall develop a plan to double the Maine Student Grant Program within 5 years and make the case for that increase to the Legislature.

Recommendation #8: The Maine Higher Educational Attainment Council shall review the possibility of establishing new or expanded loan forgiveness or loan repayment programs, tuition reimbursement program for current employees or other student financial assistance programs as a way to reduce the financial barriers to postsecondary study by both traditional students and adult learners. The possibility of programs targeted at occupational or geographic shortages should be considered. The Council shall report its findings and recommendations to the Legislature.

Recommendation #9: The Maine Higher Educational Attainment Council shall review and report to the Legislature on the possibility of addressing the high cost of higher education by using tax credits to encourage private giving to qualified educational endowments that would be used to offset the unmet needs of students.

***Recommendation #10*:** The Maine Higher Educational Attainment Council shall review and report to the Legislature on other student financial aid options to address the high cost of attending institutions of higher education in the State, including;

- Encouraging college graduates to remain in Maine by offering tax credits to graduates from Maine institutions of higher education who remain and work in the State
- Identifying ways to encourage a greater commitment by employers to support tuition reimbursement for current employees, possible tax or other incentives

F. Improve persistence to graduation

Findings: On the question of whether retention of students once enrolled is a problem, this may be one of those issues on which where you stand depends on where you sit. Overall Maine ranks fairly high in the national statistics. [11] Individually there are several schools that have extraordinary results. Bates, Bowdoin and Colby each graduate a very high rate of students (82%-93%). Maine Maritime is also well above average. The graduation rate at the Technical College System campuses, the Orono and Farmington campuses of the University of Maine System and the private Husson College are generally average or above when compared to national statistics.[12] Nevertheless, the consensus of the Commission is that this is a problem that needs serious attention. There are a number of public and private campuses that are below average; and, given our identified need to raise educational attainment significantly, that is not good enough. Clearly there are practices that lead to success in this area; those should be identified and shared.

11 In Measuring Up 2000 a report of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, Maine is awarded a grade of B+.

12 FAME: Profile of Maine Higher Education; paper presented to the Commission; 10/1/01.

Recommendation #11: The public and private institutions of higher education in the State shall convene a retention summit of their chief academic officers, and including outside experts, to identify best practices for improving persistence and develop a plan for implementing those practices where needed.

G. Support research and development

Findings: The State Planning Office report, 30 and 1000, points out the strong correlation between a state's economic prosperity and two factors: the percentage of a state's adult population with 4-year degrees and the number of dollars per employed worker spent in the state on R & D. According to that report while we are attempting to raise the level of educational attainment in the State to the national average, we need also to increase the commitment to R & D to $1000 per worker from all sources. Working toward and eventually attaining those thresholds will stimulate economic activity that leads to widespread prosperity in the state economy.

Significant activity has occurred in this area, and investments in R & D are growing in Maine. Since 1993, the Maine Science & Technology Foundation has been engaged in efforts to build an environment for successful science and technology-driven innovation in Maine. MSTF's action plan, Positioning Maine for the New Economy, issued in 2001 calls for creating, recruiting and retaining an educated and skilled workforce and the strengthening research and development capacity in Maine as well as other entrepreneurial and technological innovation. State funds have been invested related activities within the University of Maine System, through the Maine Technology Institute and in other research and technology-based activities. Private research laboratories are expanding and establishing new R & D programs.

Although our mission is directed to educational attainment, the Commission recognizes the importance of the research and development component of the Planning Office report and the related work of the Maine Science and Technology Foundation, University of Maine System, Maine Technology Institute and other public and private research institutions.

Recommendation #12: The Maine Higher Educational Attainment Council shall work with the public and private entities engaged in research and development in Maine to develop a comprehensive strategy to create a research and development capability that will generate economic opportunity for the people of Maine and that is balanced between the public and private sectors.

H. Increase higher education capacity

Findings. As indicated earlier, if the Commission's recommendations are implemented and the work of the Council is successful, the result will be future increases in the number of college degrees earned by Maine citizens. The Commission is aware that such success may create capacity issues at existing institutions. Because such issues involve all post-secondary institutions in Maine, including the public university system, the independent private colleges, the technical college system and proprietary degree-granting colleges, the Council's strategic

planning process must include an ongoing review of long-term, statewide higher education capacity issues.

Recommendation #13: The Maine Higher Educational Attainment Council shall regularly examine the capacity of post secondary educational institutions in the State to meet the educational needs of Maine citizens and report its findings to the Legislature.

Recommendation #14: The Legislature must continue to support public higher education institutions to meet their on-going goals for quality education and services and periodically augment that funding to address access issues relating to general or specific capacity problems.

CONCLUSION

A state cannot attain and sustain an adequate level of economic prosperity without a well-educated workforce. An educated workforce also makes for citizens who are better positioned to contribute to and participate in the cultural, social and political fabric of a state. Maine chronically lags behind other states in most measures of both prosperity and educational attainment. It is vitally important that as a state we take steps to break that pattern. More of our students must pursue education beyond high school. More of those students must remain in or return to Maine after completing their studies. More adults must pursue training, retraining and other postsecondary study programs. And all our citizens must become lifelong learners.

For that to happen, many changes must occur. One of the most important is to establish and support the aspirations of our young people for higher education. That requires early, individual career planning services for students and families, the highest level of support for financial aid programs that we can afford, and the availability of quality programs of study at all the State's institutions of higher education. The educational needs of the current adult population need to be attended to because they will continue to make up the majority of our workforce for years to come. Above all, we must begin to establish education as the clear number one, long-term priority for the State of Maine. Less than that will not do.

These changes will require an investment of additional resources, largely from state government. In these times of fiscal uncertainty, such a commitment will be difficult. It is not a decision that we can shirk, however. A long-term commitment is necessary, must begin immediately and must be sustained over time. Our recommendations are tailored to the fiscal needs facing the State right now. They begin the commitment necessary and set the stage for continuation of that commitment into the future.

APPENDIX A

Authorizing Legislation

APPROVED
JUN 28 '01
BY GOVERNOR

CHAPTER
66
RESOLVES

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD
TWO THOUSAND AND ONE

S.P. 616 - L.D. 1797

Resolve, to Establish the Blue Ribbon Commission on Postsecondary Educational Attainment

Emergency preamble. Whereas, Acts and resolves of the Legislature do not become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

Whereas, the State's elementary and secondary students consistently perform at or near the top nationally in standardized tests; and

Whereas, the percentage of the State's students who graduate from high school is at a very high rate of over 85%; and

Whereas, despite their demonstrated abilities and successes, Maine students go on to college at a rate far below the national average; and

Whereas, according to the "2001 Measures of Growth" issued by the Maine Development Foundation, the percentage of Maine residents over 25 years of age with at least a 4-year degree is 24.1%, well below the New England average of 30.8% and the national average of 26.0%; and

Whereas, over recent years a number of worthwhile efforts have been undertaken to increase the educational achievement of Maine students, yet Maine continues to lag significantly behind the rest of New England and the rest of the country in the level of educational attainment; and

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Whereas, these efforts include expansions in scholarship assistance, creation of the Community College Partnership and increases in base funding for the University of Maine System, the Maine Maritime Academy and the Maine Technical College System; and

Whereas, this legislation establishes the Blue Ribbon Commission on Postsecondary Educational Attainment, which is charged with the duty of assessing the economic impact on the State of increasing levels of educational attainment and developing a plan to address this problem; and

Whereas, in order for the appointing authorities to make their appointments and for the commission to have sufficient time to conclude its work, it is necessary for this legislation to take effect immediately; and

Whereas, in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now, therefore, be it

Sec. 1. Commission established. Resolved: That the Blue Ribbon Commission on Postsecondary Educational Attainment, referred to in this resolve as the "commission," is established; and be it further

Sec. 2. Commission membership. Resolved: That the commission consists of the following 15 members:

1. Two members from the Senate, appointed by the President of the Senate. In making these appointments, the President shall give preference to members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs and the Joint Standing Committee on Business and Economic Development;

2. Two members from the House of Representatives, appointed by the Speaker of the House. In making these appointments, the Speaker shall give preference to members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs and the Joint Standing Committee on Business and Economic Development;

3. The Commissioner of Education or the commissioner's designee;

4. The Commissioner of Economic and Community Development or the commissioner's designee;

5. The President of the Maine Technical College System or the president's designee;

6. The Chancellor of the University of Maine System or the chancellor's designee;

7. The President of the Maine Maritime Academy or the president's designee;

8. A representative of a foundation dedicated to student achievement and higher education, appointed by the Speaker of the House;

9. One member representing private sector higher education, appointed by the Speaker of the House;

10. One member representing the interests of providers of college loans or scholarships, appointed by the Speaker of the House;

11. One representative of a statewide business organization, appointed by the President of the Senate;

12. One representative of a statewide labor organization, appointed by the President of the Senate; and

13. One member representing a statewide association of school guidance counselors, appointed by the President of the Senate; and be it further

Sec. 3. Chairs. Resolved: That the first named Senate member is the Senate chair of the commission and the first named House of Representatives member is the House chair of the commission; and be it further

Sec. 4. Appointments; meetings. Resolved: That all appointments must be made no later than 30 days following the effective date of this resolve. The Executive Director of the Legislative Council must be notified by all appointing authorities once the selections have been made. When the appointment of all members has been completed, the chairs of the commission shall call and convene the first meeting of the commission within 30 days of being notified that all appointments have been made; and be it further

Sec. 5. Duties. Resolved: That the commission shall study the impact of improving postsecondary educational attainment on the State's economy, assess the success of current efforts to improve educational attainment and develop a plan to improve the

State's levels of associate's degree and bachelor's degree attainment.

1. In conducting its study, the commission shall:

A. Review current data and research on levels of educational attainment among the New England states and nationally;

B. Assess the economic impact of the State's current levels of educational attainment and the benefits likely to accrue from raising that level;

C. Assess the role of educational attainment in providing an economic climate that allows the State's young adults to find employment at competitive wages here in the State; and

D. Assess the current success of the State's higher educational institutions in preparing students for the challenges of the modern economy.

2. The commission shall develop a plan to:

A. Encourage more high school graduates in the State to enroll in postsecondary educational programs;

B. Assist adults in the State in pursuing and attaining higher degrees;

C. Attain a state educational achievement level, defined as a percentage of adults over the age of 25 years with at least a bachelor's degree, that is equal to the New England average; and

D. Build an educational system that will provide the best possible return to students in the State and the State's economy by preparing students for the modern economy.

The plan must, to the extent possible, build upon current efforts and must include an estimate of the costs associated with implementing it; and be it further

Sec. 6. Staff assistance. Resolved: That, upon approval of the Legislative Council, the Office of Policy and Legal Analysis shall provide necessary staffing services to the commission; and be it further

Sec. 7. Compensation. Resolved: That the members of the commission who are Legislators are entitled to the legislative per diem, as defined in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 3,

section 2, and reimbursement for necessary expenses incurred for their attendance at authorized meetings of the commission. Other members of the commission who are not otherwise compensated by their employers or other entities that they represent are entitled to receive reimbursement of necessary expenses incurred for their attendance at authorized meetings; and be it further

Sec. 8. Report. Resolved: That the commission shall submit its report, including the plan required by section 5, together with any necessary implementing legislation, to the Second Regular Session of the 120th Legislature no later than December 5, 2001. If the commission requires a limited extension of time to conclude its work, it may apply to the Legislative Council, which may grant the extension; and be it further

Sec. 9. Budget. Resolved: That the chairs of the commission, with assistance from the commission staff, shall administer the commission's budget. Within 10 days after its first meeting, the commission shall present a work plan and proposed budget to the Legislative Council for approval. The commission may not incur expenses that would result in the commission's exceeding its approved budget. Upon request from the commission, the Executive Director of the Legislative Council shall promptly provide the commission chairs and staff with a status report on the commission's budget, expenditures incurred and paid and available funds.

Emergency clause. In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this resolve takes effect when approved.

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APPENDIX B

The Blue Ribbon Commission on Postsecondary Educational Attainment Membership List

BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Resolve 2001, Ch. 66

As Of Friday, January 11, 2002

Appointment(s) by the President

Sen. Mary R. Cathcart, **Chair** 120 Main Street Orono, ME 04473 (207)-866-3054	Senate Member
Sen. Margaret Rotundo 446 College Street Lewiston, ME. 04240 (207)-784-3259	Senate Member
Mark L. Gray Maine Education Association 35 Community Drive Augusta, ME 04330-9487	Representing Statewide Labor Organizations
Christopher J. Hall 7 University Drive Augusta, ME 04330-9412	Representing Statewide Business Organizations
Susan Tuthill Guidance Department/Waterville High School 1 Brooklyn Avenue Waterville, ME 04901	Representing Guidance Counselors

Appointment(s) by the Speaker

Rep. Elizabeth Watson, **Chair** 136 Maine Avenue, Apt. 6 Farmingdale, ME 04344 (207)-621-2871	House Member
Rep. Thomas W. Murphy, Jr. 136 Summer Street Kennebunk, ME 04043 (207)-985-3904	House Member
Honorable Wendy Ault, Exec. Director MELMAC Foundation 188 Whitten Road Augusta, Maine 04330	Representing Providers of Loans and Scholarships
Colleen Quint, Executive Director The Mitchell Institute 22 Monument Square, Suite 200 Portland, ME 04101	Representing a Foundation Dedicated to Student Achievement & Higher Ed
Dr. George Spann President - Thomas College 180 West River Road Waterville, Maine 04901-5097	Representing Private Sector Education

Chancellor, UMS

Dr. Charles Lyons
Vice Chancellor - University College
107 Maine Avenue
Bangor, Maine 04401-4880
(207)-621-3403

Representing Chancellor of the University of Maine System

Commissioner, DECD

Peggy Schaffer
DECD
59 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0059
(207)-624-9801

Representing Commissioner of DECD

Commissioner, DOE

J. Duke Albanese, Commissioner
Dept. of Education
23 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0023
(207)-287-5114

Commissioner, Department of Education

President, MMA

Len Tyler, President
Maine Maritime Academy
Castine, Maine

President, Maine Maritime Academy

President, MTCS

Dr. John Fitzsimmons
President, MTCS
Station 131
Augusta, ME 04333
(207)-287-1070

President, Maine Technical College System

Staff: David Elliott 287-1670

APPENDIX C

List of Presenters

PRESENTERS TO BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION ATTAINMENT

John Fitzsimmons MTCS	MTCS Perspective; Adult Workforce without a Degree/TCS Placement History
Donald McDowell, Interim Chancellor, UMS	UMS Perspective
William Beardsley, President Husson College George Spann, President Thomas College	Private College Perspective
Charles Lyons, Vice Chancellor Univ. College and Interim Pres., UMA	University College
Charlie Lyons, UMS John Fitzsimmons, MTCS	Community College Partnership
Henry Bourgeois MDF	Higher Education Achievement in Maine
Evan Richert SPO	Higher Ed Attainment and R & D Investment
Bennett Katz	Perspective on Postsecondary Education
Greg Gollihur FAME	Profile of Higher Education and Financial Aid Profile
Russ Quaglia Ntl. Ctr. Stud. Aspir.	Student Aspirations
Colleen Quint Mitchell Institute	Barriers to College in Maine
Charlie Colgan Muskie School	Maine Workforce Data
Profs. David Wihry and Tom Ducheneau UME	Comparison of Appropriations, Tuition and Spending Patterns in Higher Ed
Pam Tetley Maine Transition Network	Transitional Services
Susan Tuthill Paula Tingley David White	Approaches to School Career Counseling
Yellow Breen DOE	Career Prep and Learning Results
Jim Nelson, Gear Up Program	Career Prep for At-risk Students
Rusty Cyr Bureau of Employment Services, DOL	State Workforce Training Programs
Jean Gulliver, SBE	State Board Perspective

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APPENDIX D
Recommended Legislation

LR #3339
Sponsor: Postsecondary Ed Study
Drafted by: DCE
Date: 01/08/02
Doc. Name: G:\OPLAGEA\COMMTTEE\EDU\BILLDRFT\333901.doc

Title: An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Postsecondary Educational Attainment

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA c. 406 is enacted to read:

CHAPTER 406
MAINE HIGHER EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT COUNCIL

§10401. Maine Higher Educational Attainment Council established

The Maine Higher Educational Attainment Council, referred to in this section as "the council," is established to create a statewide vision for higher educational attainment and develop, maintain and evaluate implementation of a long-term plan for higher educational attainment in the State.

1. **Membership.** The council consists of 16 members. The Governor, President of the Senate and Speaker of the House of Representatives shall jointly appoint the following 16 members, 2 of whom shall be designated to serve as co-chairs of the council:

A. Twelve members having a broad range of interests including, but not limited to: higher education, kindergarten through grade 12 education, business, and labor, and

B. Four members of the Legislature with a demonstrated interest in higher education.

One member of the council must be a member of a statewide association of independent colleges.

2. **Appointments.** Members appointed to the council serve a 3-year term.

3. **Quorum.** Nine members of the council constitute a quorum.

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4. Compensation. Members of the council are not entitled to compensation for their services, except for those members of the Legislature appointed to the council who receive the legislative per diem.

§10402. Powers and duties

1. Develop a long-term plan for increasing the level of educational attainment in the State. The council shall:

A. Develop and recommend a long-range plan, goals, benchmarks and alternative strategies for increasing the level of educational attainment in the State;

B. Monitor progress in accomplishing the plan's vision, goals and benchmarks; and

C. Recommend changes in the plan to reflect the newly identified educational needs of the State.

2. Council procedures. The council shall use the following guidelines when developing the plan described in subsection 1.

A. The process must be long-term and continuous with a multi-year planning horizon. It must include clear authority for monitoring and evaluating progress in evaluating the plan on a regular basis.

B. The process must have a strategic focus and measurable outcomes, with clear goal setting and performance indicators.

C. The council may appoint working groups and advisory committees as necessary, representing key concerned parties to accomplish the goals outlined in this section.

D. The process must be statewide in scope, using available technology to ensure that all areas of the State have accessibility to the work of the council.

E. Preparation and maintenance of the plan must be through a public and private partnership approach that is objective and nonpartisan.

3. Plan contents. The plan developed by the council must consist of:

A. A process for improving the State's educational attainment that demonstrates a shared commitment to achieving that end and a recognition that new forms of cooperation among public and private institutions of higher education, k-12 education, the business community and State Government are required to achieve the plan's goals;

B. Benchmarks for accomplishing the plan that are specific and quantifiable performance indicators against which each of the goals that have been set forth to accomplish the vision can be measured;

C. Alternative strategies to accomplish the benchmarks based upon the best practices in Maine, other states and other countries; and

D. A strategy for improving educational attainment that is not limited to traditional baccalaureate programs. The plan must include consideration of improving the academic and career preparation of all k-12 students, increasing workforce training and retraining programs, removing financial and other barriers to educational attainment and increasing the capacity of all types of post secondary educational programs to meet the educational needs of Maine citizens.

4. Fiscal matters. The responsibility for funding of the council must be shared equally between state government and the business community. The Department of Economic and Community Development shall serve as the council's fiscal agent providing regular financial reports to the council on funds received and expended and an annual audit. The council shall seek funds and accept gifts to support the council's objectives.

5. Staff support. The council shall contract with the Maine Development Foundation for staff support to fulfill the requirements for carrying out the purposes of this section.

6. Report. Beginning in January 2003, the council shall report annually to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over educational matters. The council shall report on implementation of its plan and recommended changes to the plan.

SUMMARY

This bill is reported by the Blue Ribbon Commission on Postsecondary Educational Attainment pursuant to Resolves 2001, chapter 66, section 8. The bill establishes the Maine Higher Education Attainment Council to develop a long-term plan for improving the level of educational attainment in the State and to provide a unified voice for higher education in the State. The council is a 16-member body appointed jointly by the Governor, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House. The council is to be equally funded by state government and the business community. It will report to the Legislature's Education Committee biennially.

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Author(s): David C. Elliott, Esq.

Corporate Source: Maine State Legislature

Publication Date: January, 2002

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